

LOS ANGELES TIMES

'It Takes Two': A Predictable but Fun Romp

MOVIE REVIEW

By KEVIN THOMAS
TIMES STAFF WRITER

There's a show-biz axiom about actors not going up against kids on the screen, but in the giddy, lively "It Takes Two," Kirstie Alley more than lives up to her star billing—even if she and her equally adept co-star Steve Guttenberg are teamed with those practiced scene-stealers, the Olsen twins of TV's "Full House."

Alley is Diane Barrows, a hearty Manhattan orphanage caseworker looking for Mr. Right and wishing he and she could then adopt feisty 9-year-old Amanda Lemmon (Mary-Kate Olsen). Barrows knows she should keep her detachment, but she finds streetwise Amanda irresistible. Meanwhile, 9-year-old Alyssa Callaway (Ashley Olsen) is in an opposite predicament: how to keep her long-widowed father Roger (Guttenberg) from marrying the dreadful socialite Clarice (Jane Sibbett)—a grasping, child-hating airhead. As

it happens the vast Callaway country estate—Roger is a pioneer cellular-phone tycoon worth \$20 billion—is across the lake from a summer camp he has established and where Diane has taken her young charges.

Anyone the age of Amanda and Alyssa and above will be able to figure out instantly that after the two girls cross paths, have fun and adventure exchanging lives, that they're going to play Cupid.

Writer Deborah Dean Davis and director Andy Tennant are fully aware of the absolute predictability of their material and therefore make the getting to an inevitable ending as much fun as possible. They turn a plot that is entirely a contrivance into a sturdy structure for farce.

Davis is a skilled writer, but it's Tennant—here moving from TV to films—who makes exhilarating what in lesser hands could so easily have seemed a stale and old-fashioned "Princess and the Pauper" turn. It would seem he persuaded everyone involved that an affectionate tongue-in-cheek approach was the only way to go.

In both knockabout physical comedy and quizzical repartee, Alley exudes a roll-with-the-punches good nature.

Guttenberg brings a self-deprecating charm to the unpretentious Roger, and Philip Bosco is the perfect butler, discreet but loyal, unobtrusive in attempting to steer his boss away from a disastrous course. At first you have the feeling that Sibbett, in playing the hilarious woman-you-love-to-hate Clarice, won't have any place to go with her, but she becomes the constant foil, against which everyone else evolves.

'It Takes Two'

Kirstie Alley..... Diane Barrows
Steve Guttenberg..... Roger Callaway
Mary-Kate Olsen..... Amanda Lemmon
Ashley Olsen..... Alyssa Callaway
Philip Bosco..... Vincenzo
Jane Sibbett..... Clarice Kensington
A Warner Bros. release of a Rysher Entertainment presentation. Director Andy Tennant. Producers James Orr and Jim Crickshank. Executive producers Keith Samples, Mel Eros. Screenplay by Deborah Dean Davis. Cinematographer Kenneth D. Zunder. Editor Roger Bondelli. Costumes Molly McGuinness. Music Sherman and Ray Foote. Production designer Edward Pisoni. Art director Vlasta Svoboda. Set decorator Enrico Campana. Running time: 1 hour, 40 minutes.

■ In general release throughout Southern California.

As for the Olsen twins, they're perky, precocious types, throwbacks to an earlier Hollywood in which children tended to perform rather than act and are therefore ideal for "It Takes Two."

■ **MPAA rating:** PG, for some mild language. **Times guidelines:** It is suitable for all ages.

For the Record

Jazz review—In the review of Dee Dee Bridgewater's concert in Thursday's Calendar section, pianist Thierry Eliez was misidentified as the drummer in Bridgewater's trio.

Botero tours—The review in Thursday's Calendar of sculptures by Fernando Botero included the wrong phone number for information and to arrange tours. Call the Beverly Hills Recreation and Parks Department at (310) 285-2537.

Photo caption—Due to incorrect information supplied to The Times, a photo caption on the cover of Monday's Calendar section misidentified two dancers from the Dance Theatre of Harlem. They are Christina Johnson and Robert Garland.

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